

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A client device, comprising:
 - a connection interface operable to connect to a server over a network;
 - a receiver operable to receive content data;
 - a data storage unit operable to store a plurality of icon identification data sets associated with a plurality of icons such that a given one of the plurality of icon identification data sets is associated with a specific one of the plurality of icons, and to store a plurality of passwords associated with a plurality of users of said client device such that a given one of the plurality of users is associated with a particular one of the plurality of passwords;
 - a display unit operable to display selected content, to display a user list identifying the plurality of users of said client device, to receive a user-entered password ~~when in response to~~ the given one of the plurality of users ~~is being~~ selected, and ~~when in response to~~ said client device verifying~~ies~~ that the user-entered password corresponds to the particular one of the plurality of passwords that is associated with the given one of the plurality of users, to display content based on the received content data, ~~to and~~ display a plurality of plates, ~~icon buttons associated with the plurality of icons such that a given one of the plurality of icon buttons represents a particular one of the plurality of icons, and to display a portion of the plurality of plates being representations~~ associated with a plurality of members of a buddy list ~~that is associated with that of the given one of the plurality of users~~ such that a given one of ~~the portion of the plurality of plates representations~~ is associated with a specific one of the plurality of members of the

buddy list and includes a portion region providing an particular associated one of a plurality of visual clues which indicates an on-line status of another client device associated with that member of the buddy list, said display unit being further operable to display only the portion region providing the particular associated one of the plurality of visual clues in place of the given one of the plurality of plates, the plurality of plates including a group plate associated with a group that includes any of the members of the buddy list whose associated client device is displaying the selected content and which includes the plates associated with such members of the buddy list, the group plate including a message urging the given one of the plurality of users to invite the members of the buddy list to watch the selected content upon none of the members of the buddy list being included in the group representations in its entirety;

a selection unit operable to receive from the given one of the plurality of users a selection of a desired one of the plurality of plates, the display unit being operable to display a plurality of icon buttons in response to the desired one of the plurality of plates being selected, the plurality of icon buttons being respectively associated with the plurality of icons such that the invitation icon button is associated with an invitation icon, the invitation icon including a message asking the particular member of the buddy list to watch the selected content, and the selection unit being further operable to receive from a ~~first~~ the given one of the plurality of users a selection of a desired one of the plurality of icon buttons ~~for transmission of its associated icon to another client device connected to the server, the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons being an invitation icon button,~~

and the icon associated with the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons including a message asking the user of the another client device to watch the selected content; and

a transmitter operable to transmit a request to the server in response to the particular one of the plurality of members of the buddy list and the invitation icon button being selected, the request including an identification number of said client device, an identification number of the another client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list, identification data associated with the given one of the plurality of users, the icon identification data set associated with the invitation icon, and data associated with the selected content, the request causing a command that the server to transmit a command the icon associated with the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons to the another client device and associated with the particular member of the buddy list, the command including a respective one of the plurality of the identification number of said client device, the identification data associated with the given one of the plurality of users, the icon identification data set associated with the invitation icon, identification and the data sets that corresponds to the icon associated with the selected content and causing the further one of the plurality of icon buttons so that the server transmits a further command to the another client device to execute the invitation icon and display an invitation to watch associated with the selected content one of the plurality of icon buttons, the further command including the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets.

2. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the data storage unit stores icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons.

3. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a data receiver operable to receive icon display and audio data from the server, the icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons.

4. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a data receiver operable to connect to the Internet and to receive, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons.

5. - 6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the request indicates a group of other client devices to which the server is to transmit the ~~further~~-command.

8. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to the icon that represents a comment on the content and that offers users of the group of other client devices possible responses to the comment.

9. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 8, further comprising a response receiver operable to receive the responses to the comment from the group of other client devices, the display unit displaying a result of the responses.

10. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon representing a question and possible answers.

11. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 10, further comprising an answer receiver operable to receive the answers to the question from the group of other

client devices, the display unit displaying a result of the answers.

12. (cancelled)

13. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the respective one of plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon that represents a comment on the content and that offers a user of the another client device possible responses to the comment.

14. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon representing a social interaction having only a single possible positive response.

15. (cancelled)

16. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

17. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the selected content is pay content.

18. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein when the given one of the plurality of users selects the desired one of the plurality of icon buttons using the selection unit, the display unit displays an interface that provides that user with an option of paying fees for the pay content for the user of the another client device.

19. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

20. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

21. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the command-request transmitted by the transmitter also commands-causes the server to transmit an invitation-command to devices other than the another client device.

22. (previously presented) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a chat unit operable to communicate with a plurality of other client devices in a chat group and to control the display unit to display the content and chat text based on data received from the plurality of other client devices in the chat group, the command transmitted by the transmitter commanding the server to transmit the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets to the plurality of other client devices in the chat group.

23. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the display unit displays the icon buttons superimposed on the content.

24. (currently amended) A method of interactive television communication between a plurality of client devices each of which is connected to a server over a network, said method comprising:

receiving, at the server over the network from each one of the plurality of client devices, information on a television viewing status of that client device;

storing, at the server, a buddy list associated with a given one of a plurality of users of a given one of the plurality of client devices, the buddy list having a plurality of members respectively associated with other ones of the plurality of client devices, the buddy list including the information on the television viewing status of each one of the associated client devices;

sending, from the server, selected content and the information on the television viewing status of the associated client devices over the network to the given one of the plurality of client devices so that, when in response to the given one of the plurality of users ~~is selected at~~ providing a user-entered password to the given one of the plurality of client devices and the given one of

the plurality of client devices verifyingies that a—the user-entered password corresponds to one stored in the given one of the plurality of client devices in association with the given one of the plurality of users—at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a display unit of the given one of the plurality of client devices displays the selected content and displays a plurality of plates, representations—a portion of the plurality of plates being associated with the plurality of members of the buddy list such that a given one of the portion of the plurality of representations—plates is associated with a specific one of the plurality of members of the buddy list and includes a portion region providing an particular associated one of a plurality of visual clues which indicates the on-line status of the client device associated with that member of the buddy list, the portion region providing the particular associated one of the plurality of visual clues being displayable in place of the given one of the plurality of plates, the plurality of plates including a group plate associated with a group that includes any of the members of the buddy list whose associated client device is displaying the selected content and which includes the plates associated with such members of the buddy list, the group plate including a message urging the given one of the plurality of users to invite the members of the buddy list to watch the selected content upon none of the members of the buddy list being included in the grouprepresentations in its entirety;

receiving, at the server over the network from the given one of the plurality of client devices, a request including an identification number of the given one of the plurality of client devices, an identification number of the client device associated with a particular member of

the buddy list, identification data associated with the given one of the plurality of users, data associated with the selected content, and a command that the server transmit an icon identification data associated with a—an invitation icon selected by the given one of the plurality of users from a plurality of icon buttons to a selected displayed by the given one of the plurality of client devices and including a message asking the particular member of the buddy list to watch icon identification data corresponding to the icon associated with the selected content one of the plurality of icon buttons; and

transmitting, from the server over the network to the selected one of the plurality of client devices associated with the particular member of the buddy list in response to the server receiving the request, a further command including an identification number of the given one of the plurality of client devices, the identification data associated with the given one of the plurality of users, the data associated with the selected content, and the icon identification data associated with the invitation icon, thereby causing the client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list to execute the invitation icon associated with and display an invitation the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons, the further command including the corresponding icon identification data, wherein the given one of the plurality of client devices displays selected content, the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons is an invitation icon button, and the icon associated with the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons includes a message asking the user of the another client device to watch the selected content.

25. (cancelled)

26. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving an agreement to watch the selected content from the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list; and

communicating with the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list to synchronize display of the selected content at the given one of the plurality of client devices and at the associated-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list.

27. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

28. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the selected content is pay content.

29. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising charging fees for the pay content for the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the request indicates that a-the user of the given one of the plurality of client devices has agreed to pay the fees for the pay content for the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list.

30. (original) A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

31. (original) A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

32. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising discounting fees charged to the given one of the plurality of client devices for the pay content when the user of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list has agreed to pay for the pay content for ~~the associated~~that client device.

33. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising providing incentive points to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the user of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list has agreed to pay for the pay content for the ~~associated~~that client device.

34. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising receiving agreement-to-pay information from the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list when the user of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list has agreed to pay for the pay content for the ~~associated~~that client device.

35. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising sending further icon identification data to the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list when the user of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list has not agreed to pay for the pay content, the further icon identification data identifying an icon for urging the user of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list to pay for the pay content.

36. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising:

searching, by the server, for an online device having the same user as that of the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list when the ~~associated~~-client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list is not online; and

sending, from the server to the online device, an invitation to watch the selected content.

37. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising exchanging chat text between ~~other~~ ones

members of the plurality of client devices in a chat group, wherein the icon identification data is transmitted from the given one of the plurality of client devices to other ~~the other ones of the plurality of~~ client devices in the chat group.

38. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the information on the television viewing status includes information indicates which ones of the plurality of client devices that are associated with the plurality of members of the buddy list are displaying the same television programs.

39. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising receiving from the ~~particular~~ client device associated with the ~~given particular~~ one of the plurality of members in the buddy list a response indicating execution of the desired icon.

40. (original) A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the icon identification data represents an icon having a comment about television content, and the response represents agreement or disagreement with the comment.

41. (original) A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the icon identification data represents an icon having a question and possible answers, and the response represents one of the possible answers.

42. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents an expression.

43. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents information about a television program.

44. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents advertisement information.

45. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising sending a command with the icon

identification data, the command instructing the particular client device associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list to execute the icon corresponding to the icon identification data using icon display and audio data stored locally in that client device.

46. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data includes icon display and audio data for executing the desired icon in the particular client device associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list.

47. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the request received from the given one of the plurality of client devices includes a command that the server transmit the selected one of the plurality of icons to a portion of the plurality of client devices that are displaying the same television content.

48. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the portion of the plurality of client devices includes client devices not associated with the plurality of members of the buddy list.

49. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising suggesting icons to the ~~particular~~-client devices associated with the given one of the plurality of members of in the buddy list.

50. (currently amended) A method of interactive television communication between a plurality of client devices connected to a server over a network, said method comprising:

receiving content data at a given one of the plurality of client devices;

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a user list identifying a plurality of users of that client device;

receiving, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a user-entered password ~~when in response to~~ a given one of the plurality of users ~~is being~~ selected;

verifying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, that the user-entered password corresponds to one stored in the given one of the plurality of client devices in association with the given one of the plurality of users; and

~~in response to when~~ the user-entered password ~~is being~~ verified as corresponding to the one stored in association with the given one of the plurality of users,

displaying content based on the received content data at the given one of the plurality of client devices,

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a plurality of icon buttons associated with a plurality of icons whereby a given one of the plurality of icon buttons represents a particular one of a plurality of icons,

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a plurality of ~~plates representations~~ associated with a plurality of members of a buddy list ~~associated with that of the given one of the plurality of users~~ such that a given one of ~~the portion of~~ the plurality of ~~plates representations~~ is associated with a specific one of the plurality of members of the buddy list and includes a ~~portion region~~ providing an ~~particular associated~~ one of a plurality of visual clues which indicates an on-line status of ~~the another~~ client device associated with that member ~~of the buddy list, the region portion~~ providing the particular one of the plurality of visual clues being displayable in place of the ~~given associated~~ one of the plurality of

plates~~representations~~ in its entirety, the plurality of plates including a group plate associated with a group that includes any of the members of the buddy list whose associated client device is displaying the selected content and which includes the plates associated with such members of the buddy list, the group plate including a message urging the given one of the plurality of users to invite the members of the buddy list to watch the selected content upon none of the members of the buddy list being included in the group,

receiving a selection of a desired one of the plurality of plates at the given one of the plurality of client devices from the given one of the plurality of users,

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a plurality of icon buttons in response to the desired one of the plurality of plates being selected, the plurality of icon buttons being respectively associated with the plurality of icons such that the invitation icon button is associated with an invitation icon, the invitation icon including a message asking the particular member of the buddy list to watch the selected content,

receiving~~selecting~~, at the given one of the plurality of client devices from the given one of the plurality of users, a desired one of the plurality of icon buttons ~~for transmission of its associated icon to another one of the plurality of client devices, and~~

sending, a request from the given one of the plurality of client devices over the network to the server in response to the particular one of the plurality of members of the buddy list and the

invitation icon button being selected, a the request
an identification number of said client device, an
identification number of the another client device
associated with the particular member of the buddy
list, identification data associated with the given
one of the plurality of users, the icon identification
data associated with the invitation icon, and data
associated with the selected content, including a
command that the request causing the server to
transmit a command the icon associated with the
selected one of the plurality of icon buttons to the
further another one of the plurality of client devices
associated with the particular member of the buddy
list, and the command including the identification
number of said client device, the identification data
associated with the given one of the plurality of
users, the icon identification data associated with
the invitation icon, identification and the data
associated with the icon associated with the selected
content and causing the further one of the plurality
of icon buttons so that the server transmits a further
command to the another one of the plurality of client
devices to execute the invitation icon associated with
and display an invitation to watch the selected
content one of the plurality of icon buttons, the
further command including the associated icon
identification data, wherein the given one of the
plurality of client devices displays selected content,
the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons is
an invitation icon button, and the icon associated
with the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons
includes a message asking the user of the another
client device to watch the selected content.

51. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising storing, in each one of the plurality of the client devices, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons, the sent icon identification data indicating a portion of the stored icon display and audio data that is for executing the selected one of the plurality of icons.

52. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the step of sending icon identification data includes sending icon display and audio data for executing the selected one of the plurality of icons at the another one of the client devices.

53. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising connecting the server to the Internet and receiving, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons, the server sending selected icon display and audio data for executing the selected one of the plurality of icons with the icon identification data.

54. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising connecting the ~~another~~further one of the plurality of client devices to the Internet and receiving, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the selected one of the plurality of icons.

55. (cancelled)

56. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

57. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the selected content is pay content.

58. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, further comprising executing, at the another one of the client devices, a confirmation icon that informs the user that the

selected content is pay content which requires payment of a charge.

59. (original) A method as claimed in claim 58, wherein the confirmation icon enables the user of the another one of the client devices to agree to pay for the pay content with a single operation.

60. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising discounting, at the server, fees charged to the given one of the plurality of client devices for the pay content when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

61. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising providing, at the server, incentive points to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

62. (original) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising sending agreement-to-pay information from the another one of the client devices to the server when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

63. (original) A method as claimed in claim 58, further comprising sending further icon identification data from the server to the another one of the client devices when the user of the another one of the client devices has not agreed to pay for the pay content, the further icon identification data identifying an icon at the another one of the client devices for urging the user of the another one of the client devices to pay for the pay content.

64. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 57, further comprising charging, at the server, fees for the pay content for the another one of the client devices to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the request

indicates that a user of the given one of the plurality of client devices has agreed to pay the fees for the pay content for the another one of the client devices.

65. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

66. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

67. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising:

searching, by the server, for an online device having the same user as that of the another one of the client devices when the another one of the client devices is not online; and

sending from the server to the online device an invitation to watch the selected content.

68. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising exchanging chat text between client devices in a chat group, wherein the icon identification data is transmitted from the given one of the plurality of client devices to other client devices in the chat group.

69. (original) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the step of displaying the icon buttons includes displaying the icon buttons superimposed on the content.

70. (new) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

a response receiver operable to receive, from the another client device through the server, an acceptance of the invitation by the particular member of the buddy list, wherein the display unit is operable to display the group plate including the plate associated with particular member of the buddy list in response to the acceptance being received.

71. (new) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising:

receiving, at the server from the client device associated with the particular member of the buddy list, an acceptance of the invitation by the particular member of the buddy list; and

transmitting the acceptance from the server to the given one of the plurality of client devices such that the display unit of the given one of the plurality of client devices displays the group plate including the plate associated with particular member of the buddy list.

72. (new) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising:

in response to the user-entered password being verified as corresponding to the one stored in association with the given one of the plurality of users,

receiving, from the another client device through the server, an acceptance of the invitation by the particular member of the buddy list, and

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, the group plate including the plate associated with particular member of the buddy list in response to the acceptance being received.